**How tools and processes facilitate farmer – researcher interaction in NBDC**

Preliminary notes, Fergus Sinclair

As part of the NBDC reflection workshop on 15-16 November 2012 (Beth Cullen, Josie Tucker, Birhanu Zemadim, Kinde, Muluget Lemineh, Fergus Sinclair) and subsequent discussions with Simon Langan and Mulegeta Leminah on the 17th November we identified utility in mapping out a flow chart that illustrates how the various tools and processes developed within the NBDC facilitate interaction amongst farmers and researchers (Figure 1).



*Figure 1. Analysis of how tools and processes facilitate farmers having access to appropriate innovation options within NBDC. Hexagons are tools or processes (purple used primarily by researchers, green primarily by farmers). Arrows represent flows of knowledge. Fat arrows signify that a bundle of knowledge or requirements are involved in the flow. The circles within kebeles represents the existence of different farmer typologies within each kebele that may differ in their requirements and in terms of which options suit.*

During the reflection workshop several issues emerged:

1. Some knowledge requirements of farmers (e.g. livestock fodder requirements) were not addressed by local innovation platforms. This was partly because of issues surrounding participation of scientists (researchers) in the platforms. These relate both to frequency of attendance and mode of participation. This led us to discuss the need for a knowledge exchange mechanism beyond the platform to coral appropriate knowledge required by farmers not readily available within the platform.
2. While some tools and processes were already located within the researcher / farmer space with a clear role in facilitating generation and communication of innovations for farmers, or a role was clearly envisaged (denoted by ?) others were not – specifically this refers to the tools along the top of the researcher space for which the content of Kr and Kp arrows need to be defined. It is envisaged that these interact via the putative knowledge exchange mechanism rather than becoming directly embedded within the innovation platform but that remains an initial assumption that needs further exploration (could SWAT modeling be used within Wat-a-game?). Similarly the tools with ? require validation in terms of the utility within the suggested space.
3. The existence of different types of farm households, facing different constraints and opportunities and hence requiring different innovation options (signified in the diagram by smaller circles within each kebele).
4. There was discussion about the effectiveness of information flow from farmers to and from the innovation platform and the extent to which these flows were representative of, or reached (depending on direction) farmers.
5. Hierarchically it was recognized that there was a potential disjunction between local and national innovation platforms with a missing regional or basin and sub-basin level – perhaps another diagram illustrating this is required.
6. This framework could be used to develop full specification of the roles of the various tools and processes – identification of gaps and an evaluation scheme for the utility of individual elements and the whole.
7. It would perhaps be interesting to also explore how different the content of Fr&k and Io flows are amongst kebeles within innovation platforms and amongst platforms.
8. Having developed this first pass at a diagram it is immediately apparent that is would benefit from a Robert Chambers – that is, to turn it the other way up so that the research, that be at the bottom, supports the farmer innovation at the top. I won’t attempt that now as I don’t have time but it might be more appropriate should we decide to take this further.
9. I hope this is a useful start – there are tons of things I am not very aware of within NBDC which means no doubt this needs a lot of augmentation and modification – but is it a useful start?